Down

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by StratsWrote, whiskeyandspite

Summary

“Finish your dinner,” Will told him, resting his hip against the side of the table. He crossed one ankle over the other, inches away from where Hannibal’s meal lay cooling on the otherwise impeccably waxed floor. “We don’t waste, in this household, Hannibal, you know that better than most.”

Hannibal needs reminders, sometimes, that Will is his master.

Notes

From a gorgeous prompt by BonesandScales on the Kinkmeme. We couldn't resist. It also fit so well with Fetch that you could consider them part of the same verse?

See the end of the work for more notes

They had hoped to slip quietly out of the country, but in the end, that hadn't been an option. Still, Hannibal had planned for them to change identities and countries faster than Will could keep track, and by the time they were settled in a beach house in Cuba, Will felt fairly certain they were safe.

Their home was relatively secluded, out of sight from any potential neighbors, and with it's own little section of private beach, as well as a dock for the boat. Will had never yet seen a trespasser, which worked well when Hannibal got too antsy and needed to be exercised.

They had a beautiful kitchen, a well-stocked freezer. They were hidden enough for an occasional game of fetch, if Will was feeling generous, and so Hannibal had not needed to give up his favorite treat entirely.

They each had their own work areas, Hannibal's in the basement, Will's in the den, but they were rarely out of each other's line of sight. Hannibal seemed to occasionally need a reminder that Will truly had followed him out here, and Will just liked to keep an eye on him.

They had two dogs, both mutts, one a teeny lap dog and the other a huge fluffy monstrosity that was at least part Irish Wolfhound. Two dogs, but three dog beds in both the bedroom and the den. Sometimes for Hannibal's benefit, sometimes because Will had decided he needed a reminder.

On the whole, Hannibal behaved himself. He had to, in order for the two of them to be able to live as they pleased, where they pleased, but he was also a man of habit and pretentiousness. Once in a while, the instinct would rise up to be something he wasn't anymore; a man of means and privilege who held society in the palm of his hand. Sure, he still had the first two, but the latter… that wasn't his anymore.

It was, as Hannibal himself was, Will's now.

It was during dinner that that pesky pride spoke up, and Will could feel the coil of tension in Hannibal twisted tight enough to burst, so he let him speak, let him feel like he was assertive, let him dig his own grave before Will gave the command to jump into it.

"There are things I understand that you do not, Will," Hannibal was saying, tone surprisingly amicable for how rude the words were. "Certain cuts of meat must be fresh in order for the planned dish to be perfect."

"Plan another."

"Why?" Hannibal snapped back, tone clipped. "We have the means and the time. I would like to treat you."

"Because you were told no," Will said, as simple and calm as though discussing the weather, "Which should be enough of a reason for you."

Hannibal bristled. He did this, sometimes, chafed at the invisible leash Will held, even though he was the one who had begged for it to be attached. Two needs, paradoxical in nature, the

need to prove himself independent and capable overlapping with the need to be taken in hand and reminded of his place.

“You’re being ridiculous,” Hannibal told him, “You’ve no understanding of the efforts I go to in the kitchen, and so you don’t properly appreciate them.”

“Don’t I?” Will set his fork aside, dabbing at his lips with a napkin. Hannibal watched him warily; he knew well what he’d gotten himself into, but not what the response would be. No doubt he hoped for pain, to have Will’s violence exacted against him, and to seek relief in it. But he would have enjoyed that too much.

Will stood, circling the table in slow, measured steps. When he reached for Hannibal’s plate, Hannibal frowned, his brow creasing. “What are you doing?”

“Being unappreciative,” Will murmured. He tilted his hand, tipping the contents of the plate over the edge of the table and onto the floor. Bits of creamed potato splattered against his leg, meat dropping next to it with a thunk. The vegetables scattered off in various directions. Hannibal stared at him, plainly offended.

“Will-”

Will snapped his fingers and pointed to the floor. “Down, boy."

There was always a moment, when Hannibal’s humanness warred with the part of him that was much more powerful; always a moment before that part won. Will watched color drain from Hannibal’s face, watched his eyes widen incrementally, watched his pale lips pale further as he pressed them together into a thin, displeased line.

Will raised a brow. He’d diligently trained Hannibal for many months, had put every effort into making him a good dog for his master. It was a reflection on *him* if the training didn’t take.

Hannibal’s throat worked as he swallowed, his jaw tensed and relaxed, but he pushed back his chair and obediently slipped to the floor on his knees, eyes up to his master to see him just past the edge of the table.

“Finish your dinner,” Will told him, resting his hip against the side of the table. He crossed one ankle over the other, inches away from where Hannibal’s meal lay cooling on the otherwise impeccably waxed floor. “We don’t waste, in this household, Hannibal, you know that better than most.”

Nearby, there was a sound of clicking claws on tile, and Will turned to see one of their dogs lingering by the hall, eyes on the food so easily accessed. Will clicked his tongue and sent the animal away, turning back to Hannibal at his feet. “Do I need to repeat myself? Think carefully.”

Hannibal’s face slowly went from pale to pink. He could feel the heat of it in his cheeks. There should not have been anything left that Will could do to him that he would find embarrassing, and yet here he was. Will had fed him from the floor before, of course, if he

felt Hannibal needed it, but that had been in a bowl, a nice ceramic one that matched those of their other dogs.

This was not a task to ground him, or to bring him comfort. This was not Will as Master caring for his pet. This was a punishment, a humiliation, meant to bring Hannibal low. He didn't have the right mindset for it, he had not yet managed to reach down into himself and pull out his other headspace. It was not the Ripper on the floor, but Hannibal, bending low onto his hands and knees.

Will had made a mess of things. The meat was still in a single, uncut piece, and though Hannibal knew it was soft and tender, it would still be difficult to tear to pieces. If Will was feeling kind, he would allow Hannibal his 'paws', but not his fingers. He would be covered in the delicate sauce by the end of it.

Instead, Hannibal began with the creamed potatoes, licking them up from the floor in slow, uncomfortable drags of his tongue. He knew the floor was thoroughly cleaned, as he himself had done it, but there was a certain feeling of dirtiness to be lapping food from it.

Will said nothing for a long while. No words of insult, or of praise. Nothing to guide Hannibal down. He clearly intended him to be fully up and aware for this.

When Hannibal had managed to swallow the last of the potatoes, Will shoved his leg forward, his foot under Hannibal's nose. "Clean up your mess."

Hannibal made a sound in his throat, almost placating, almost upset. He looked up the length of Will's limbs to the man himself, standing comfortably still, arms crossed over his middle, expression deliberately blank. Hannibal couldn't tell if he was doing a good job, he couldn't tell if he was making it worse, and it made him feel unmoored.

He had only the command and Will's slacks in front of him, splatters of food against them. He swallowed and leaned in to obey.

In truth, Hannibal was beautiful like this. When he gave in, let that other wolf win, he was Will's good dog, his best boy. He was obedient and powerful, strong and affectionate. Even on days he wasn't Ripper, Hannibal took to Will's hand with adoration and respect. He needed to be subjugated, he craved it. Without it, his mind ran amok, his impulses were not reigned in, he was monstrous.

It was Will's duty to protect him from himself.

As Hannibal licked carefully against his leg, Will sighed and dropped his head back, staring at the ceiling.

"Appreciation is earned," he murmured, "through diligence and the final result. You cannot force feed me appreciation, Hannibal, I will choke on it. And then where would we be?"

Hannibal said nothing, just lifted his dark eyes to his master. Will could feel them against the underside of his chin, but didn't look down. He merely turned his leg for Hannibal to clean all of it.

“If only you could appreciate the things I do for *you* …”

Hannibal’s choked off little whimper was hurt. Will could hear the beginnings of a word creeping into it, before he remembered himself and his rules.

“I keep you safe,” Will continued. “I decide who you kill, and when. What sort of trace you leave, if any. I enable you to sate your needs without risking our life together. If my grip is too tight, it’s only because you were so alone before. Nobody looking after you, the way you need to be looked after.”

Another soft, heartbroken little sound. Will checked on Hannibal’s progress and pulled his leg away, pushing the chunk of meat forward with the toe of his shoe.

“If I let you run wild, you’d be a spoiled, undisciplined creature. Would you be happier that way? If you could do whatever you liked, and no one cared one way or the other?” He wouldn’t, Will knew. Hannibal craved attention, it was clear in every display he’d left as the Chesapeake Ripper. He had been a mess before Will had come to take him in hand, before Will had put him on his knees on his office floor and taught him how to obey.

Hannibal tugged awkwardly at the meat with his teeth. He’d managed to stay tidy through the potatoes, but now sauce was splattered against his chin. He would need a bath, later. Will had not yet decided if he’d bring him up for a nice, comfortable bath together, or if it was time for Hannibal to spend a few days on his knees.

He managed to catch his teeth against the meat just enough to tear off a piece and chewed. There was a lump in his throat, as much for the fact that he was being debased so, as for the fact that good food was on the ground, and would go to waste if he didn’t eat it.

Nothing was wasted here. Nothing.

He had to eat it. And he would, because Will had told him to. He would, because he had been bad, speaking so rudely to his master. Hannibal sniffed, a gentle nearly-unheard sound, and tried to take another bite.

Will watched him, wondering how long he would leave him to struggle before helping, how long it would take Hannibal to come to heel again, after his performance.

“If I let you run wild, you will be a beast,” he added quietly. “A beast unable to keep to social niceties, a beast tearing its dinner with its teeth, eating it off the floor.”

He hummed, point made, and allowed Hannibal a moment more of futile shifting, chasing the meat around the smooth surface of the floor, before crouching before him, catching Hannibal’s chin to lift it.

“Are you a beast, Hannibal?”

“No, sir.”

“You look it,” Will countered, smearing his thumb through the mess at Hannibal’s chin, feeding him the sauce. “You look barbaric and feral. *Unappreciative* . Is that what you want

to be?”

Hannibal swallowed. “No, sir.”

Will watched him a moment longer before releasing his chin and reaching for the piece of meat instead. He held it out, close enough for Hannibal to take with his mouth, still enough that he could eat it without smearing the entirety of their dining room.

Hannibal ate the last of the meat from Will’s fingers, licking them clean after. Will let his fingers rest on Hannibal’s tongue when he was done, keeping him silent and still while he thought.

“I think we’ll stay in this weekend. Spend a few days in puppy training.”

Hannibal winced, but kept himself obediently on his hands and knees, lips parted. Being referred to as a ‘puppy’ was never a good thing.

Will slid his fingers free of Hannibal’s mouth, wiping them off on his own pants. He returned to his seat, snapping his fingers to call Hannibal to heel. Hannibal knelt beside him, looking up with hesitance.

Will cut a bite-sized piece of broccoli and held it out to Hannibal with his fingers. Hannibal’s own vegetables were still scattered across the floor, and Hannibal felt a sudden rush of pleasure.

This was forgiveness. Here, on his knees, gently nipping bites from Will’s fingers, he was loved.

End Notes

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